7.1 Is there a difference between parents of children in the English program and parents of children in the French immersion program with respect to their perception of the fluency of children in French immersion?

With respect to the results of the French immersion program, a statistically significant difference was suggested between parents (as shown in Table 15). While the majority (65.3%) of parents of children enrolled in the French immersion program believed their children will be functionally bilingual after grade six, only one fifth (20.9%) of parents with children in the regular English program shared this view. An almost equal number of these parents did not agree with the statement and the majority (60.5%) responded that they didn't know.

7.2 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their views of the best way for English-speaking students to become bilingual?

While most parents in each group agreed that French immersion is the best way for English-speaking children to become bilingual, (English 59%; French 93.1%), the data indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups regarding this belief [$\underline{X}^2$ (1. $\underline{N}$ = 155) = 25.9789, $\underline{p}$<.05].

Table 15

Parental Perception Regarding Functional Bilingualism of Grade Six French Immersion Students by Program

Program	Yes	No	Don't Know	Row Total
English				
Count	9	8	26	43
Exp Val	23.0	5.1	15.0	26.7%
Row %	20.9%	18.6%	60.5%	
Col %	10.5%	42.1%	46.4%	
Tot %	5.6%	5.0%	16.1%	
French Imm				
Count	77	11	30	118
Exp Val	63.0	13.9	41.0	73.3%
Row %	65.3%	9.3%	25.4%	
Col %	89.5%	57.9%	53.6%	
Tot %	47.8%	6.8%	18.6%	
Column Total	86 53.4%	19 11.8%	56 34.8%	161 100.0%

Note. X^2 (2, N = 161) = 25.0179, $p<.01$

7.3 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the French immersion program as too much of an experiment?

Data results indicated a statistically significant difference between the parent groups' positions on the experimental nature of the immersion program. While 42.9% of parents with children in the English program agreed that the French immersion program is still too much of an experiment, only 13.2% of parents with children in immersion shared this opinion [X^2 (1, N = 149) = 14.6886, $p<.05$].

7.4 Is there a difference between parents of children in the English program and parents of children in the French immersion program with respect to the English skills of children in immersion?

The results as shown in Table 16 indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between parents' views on the English achievement of French immersion 4th and 5th graders. Slightly over two thirds (67.5%) of parents with students in French immersion agreed that by the 4th or 5th grade their children achieved at least as well as children in the English program. Only 14.6% of parents with children in the English program shared this view and 71% indicated that they didn't know.

Table 16

Parental Perception Regarding English Achievement of Fourth and Fifth Grade Immersion Students by Program

Program	Yes	No	Don't Know	Row Total
English				
Count	6	6	29	41
Exp Val	22.2	2.8	16.0	25.5%
Row %	14.6%	14.6%	70.7%	
Col %	6.9%	54.5%	46.0%	
Tot %	3.7%	3.7%	18.0%	
French Imm				
Count	81	5	34	120
Exp Val	64.8	8.2	47.0	74.5%
Row %	67.5%	4.2%	28.3%	
Col %	93.1%	45.5%	54.0%	
Tot %	50.3%	3.1%	21.1%	
Column Total	87 54.0%	11 6.8%	63 39.1%	161 100.0%

Note. $X^2(2, N = 161) = 34.7443$, $p<.05$

7.5 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their views on the appropriateness of the program for children who are gifted/talented and children who are speech impaired/ delayed, or who have learning or personality problems?

Very similar beliefs existed regarding the appropriateness of French immersion for bright children. Almost all parents (English 97.7%, French immersion 95%) shared the view that it is not exclusively for bright children [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 162) = .5637, $\underline{p}$>.05].

Generally, parents' opinions were divided regarding difficulty in French immersion for those children who have special learning or personality problems. While data did not indicate a statistically significant difference between parent groups, parents of children in the English program were more inclined to agree that these children would experience difficulty when compared with their counterparts (English 62.9%, French Imm. 47.3%) [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 145) = 2.5805, $\underline{p}$>.05]. However, while most parents believed that children who have speech or language problems before entering school could find it difficult to cope with immersion, (67.8%), the data indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups of parents [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 152) = .0414, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Again, more parents with children in the English program agreed with this view than their counterparts (English - 80.5%; French

Imm. - 63.1%).

7.6 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the cost and benefit of the French immersion program in a school?

The data (as shown on Table 17), indicated a statistically significant difference between the parent groups with respect to their belief that French immersion costs more. Almost one-third (31.0%) of parents with children in the regular English program agreed with this statement while less than one fifth (17.6%) of parents with children in the French immersion program shared the same view. Almost one-half of the total population indicated that they didn't know if 'the French immersion program costs more'.

The majority of parents with children in French immersion (92%) agreed that having a French immersion program may benefit all students in the school. However, 57.9% of their counterparts disagreed. These results indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups concerning the benefits of the French immersion program within a school. [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 151) = 43.4531, $\underline{p}$<.05].

Table 17

French Immersion Costs More - Parental Perception by Program

Program	Yes	No	Don't Know	Row Total
English				
Count	13	6	23	42
Exp Val	8.9	13.3	19.8	26.1%
Row %	31.0%	14.3%	54.8%	
Col %	38.2%	11.8%	30.3%	
Tot %	8.1%	3.7%	14.3%	
French Imm				
Count	21	45	53	119
Exp Val	25.1	37.7	56.2	73.9%
Row %	17.6%	37.8%	44.5%	
Col %	61.8%	88.2%	69.7%	
Tot %	13.0%	28.0%	32.9%	
Column	34	51	76	161
Total	21.1%	31.7%	47.2%	100.0%

Note. X^2 (2, N = 161) = 8.7154, $p<.01$

A majority (65.7%) of parents with children in the regular English stream agreed that the money spent on French immersion would be better spent on improving Core French instruction in all schools. But, only a 14.7% of parents with children in immersion shared this view. The data suggested that the difference in results between the two parent groups was statistically significant [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 144) = 34.9418, $\underline{p}$<.05].

7.7 <u>Is there a difference between parents of children in the English program and parents of children in the French immersion program with respect to the view of immersion as an 'enrichment' program?</u>

A very high level of agreement existed between parents who have children in the English program and those who have children in the French immersion program with respect to the view of French immersion as an enrichment program (English 82.1%; French immersion 83.9%) [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 157) = .0723, $\underline{p}$>.05].

7.8 <u>Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the continuation of the French immersion program through grade 12?</u>

While 76.3% of parents agreed that the French immersion program should be continued through to grade 12, the data

indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups of parents [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 152) = 6.0334, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Data showed that 81% of parents with children in immersion agreed with the continuation of the program compared to 61% of parents with children in the regular English program.

Views on the Value of Learning French

8.0 <u>Is there a difference between parents of children in the English program and parents of children in the French immersion program with respect to their attitudes toward second language acquisition as indicated by their desire to learn a second language?</u>

The results indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups with respect to their desire to speak a second language [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 148) = 27.7799, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Of parents with children in French immersion, 94.3% indicated a desire to learn a second language. Of parents with children in the regular English program, only 59.5% indicated a similar desire.

8.1 <u>Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their perception that immersion creates an elite group?</u>

The difference between parents with children in the

English program and parents with children in the French immersion program was statistically significant concerning the belief that French immersion makes children different from their friends (English 15.4%; French 0.9%); [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 156) = 14.4084, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Also, there was statistically significant evidence that parents' beliefs differ with respect to the view that French immersion programs create an elite group [$\underline{X}^2$(1, $\underline{N}$ = 150) = 3.7765, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Parents with children in the English program were far more inclined than their counterparts to agree that the immersion program creates an elite group and makes children in the program different from their friends (English 39.5%; French Imm. 23.2%).

8.2 <u>Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their motivation to learn French?</u>

Data indicated a real difference between parents of children in immersion and parents of children in the regular English program regarding their motivation to learn French. For each of four reasons cited to learn French, responses revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups (see Table 18). The greatest difference appeared in response to a statement concerning the value of bilingualism in promoting understanding and tolerance of other cultures.

Table 18

Value of Being Bilingual by Program

Program	[a]Easier to Obtain a Job	[b]Increased Understanding of French People and Culture	[c]Increased Tolerance of Other Cultures	[d]Facilitates Travel in Quebec and Abroad
English				
Yes	78.9%	53.8%	43.2%	73.7%
No	21.1%	46.2%	56.8%	26.3%
French Imm				
Yes	93.9%	86.2%	82.5%	94.8%
No	6.1%	13.8%	17.5%	5.2%

Note. [a]$\underline{X}^2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 152) = 7.1253, $\underline{p}$<.01
[b]$\underline{X}^2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 155) = 17.8495, $\underline{p}$<.001
[c]$\underline{X}^2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 151) = 21.7152, $\underline{p}$<.001
[d]$\underline{X}^2$ (2, $\underline{N}$ = 153) = 13.5778, $\underline{p}$<.001

Reasons for program choice

One of the items on the questionnaire required parents to identify the program they would select for a child entering kindergarten in the fall. Then they were provided with a space to cite reasons for their selection. The reasons given were tabulated and organized according to choice of program and current placement of child(ren).

Table 19

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in Both Programs Who Selected French Immersion

Reasons	Number of Responses
- present and future benefits of having a second language (like any skill)	1
- academic benefits	1

Table 20

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in Both Programs Who Selected English

Reasons	Number of Responses
- help with homework and understand what is going on in the classroom.	1

Table 21

Reasons Cited by Parents with Child(ren) in French Immersion Who Selected Undecided

Reasons	Number of Responses
- opportunity to have a second language	2
- easier to learn a second language when young	2
- to better equip child for future schooling	2
- to learn French culture and language (ethnic reasons)	2
- learning environment is positive	1
- to better equip child for future jobs	1
- French immersion experience has been a struggle for bright, average, intelligent children	1
- new inexperienced teachers in immersion	1
- child's choice	1
- extra challenge	1
- concern about child's ability to be 'patient'	1

Table 22

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in French Immersion Who Selected English

Reasons	Numbers of Responses
- older siblings having academic problems resulting in lowered self-esteem	2
- unable to assist child having problems	1
- taking children out of French immersion is easier said than done	1
- the English program is suffering and the school seems segregated, good English teachers have left	1
- negative reports by others regarding quality of French immersion program, arrogance and cliquishness of students	1
- better qualified in job market in future years	1
- not satisfied with results	1

Table 23

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in the French Immersion Program Who Selected French Immersion

Reasons	Number of Responses
- to become bilingual	43
- employment opportunities	14
- increased understanding and appreciation of cultural differences	13
- French background - to preserve language and culture	12
- easier to learn at a young age	9
- extra stimulation, challenge	8
- personal intellectual growth	8
- broaden horizons	6
- other siblings in program	6
- travel	5
- opportunity parents did not have	4
- extra edge in a competitive demanding society	4
- positive learning environment	4
- to enhance first language and increase possibilities of learning a third or more	4
- useful in further education	4
- to learn the second official language of Canada	3
- to develop open-mindedness	3
- child's own choice	3
- disillusioned with the French	3
- to improve self-esteem	2
- personal development	2
- communication difficulties with relatives in Quebec	1

Table 24

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in the English Program Who Selected Undecided

Reasons	Numbers of Responses
- mixed feedback from 'others' in community	1
- child's choice	1
- depends on the child's abilities	1

Table 25

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in the English Program Who Selected French Immersion

Reasons	Numbers of Responses
- opportunity	1
- exposure to two languages and life styles	1
- fluency in French	1
- easier to learn at a young age	1
- to assist child in becoming bilingual	1

Table 26

Reasons Cited by Parents With Child(ren) in the English Program Who Selected English

Reasons	Numbers of Responses
- should be left to the child to decide at a later date	4
- want to help with homework/be closely involved	4
- tried immersion but not for my child	2
- schooling in English should come first	2
- lack confidence in child's ability to cope with immersion	2
- English is the language spoken in our country	2
- English is the language spoken in the world	2
- We are English-speaking Canadians - not French	2
- English is our language and it should stay that way	1
- stress-related	1
- English is the language spoken in our home	1
- English is the language spoken in our town	1
- No-one in our family speaks French	1
- English is my child's second language	1
- French should be optional in only a language class	1
- pushing bilingualism means pushing for 2 distinct societies	1

Views on Location and Effects of Specialist Programs Within a School

9.0 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their beliefs regarding the amount of emphasis on French immersion at school.

The data indicated a significant difference between the two groups of parents regarding their views with respect to the amount of emphasis on French immersion at Mountain View [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 150) = 50.2690, $\underline{p}$<.05]. Results showed that 87.7% of parents with children in French immersion disagreed that there is too much emphasis while 72.2% of parents with children in the regular English program agreed.

9.1 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their beliefs regarding dual-track and neighborhood schools?

While the data suggested there was no statistically significant difference between the two parent groups with respect to the importance of neighborhood schools in developing a sense of community, the parents of children in French immersion were more nearly divided on the issue than were parents of students in the regular English program (French immersion 55.2%; English 68.3%). [$\underline{X}^2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 157) = .1426, $\underline{p}$>.05].

However, a statistically significant difference was evident between parent groups concerning dual-track schools. Results showed that parents with children in French immersion were more positive with respect to offering both programs in the same school than were parents with children in the English program (French immersion 86.2%; English 71.8%) [$\underline{X}^2$ (1,$\underline{N}$ = 155) = .0401, $\underline{p}$<.05].

Analysis of parents' comments

Sixty-six parents offered additional comments. These have been analyzed and summarized into categories based on choice of program for a child in kindergarten in the fall and current placement of child(ren).

A. Parents with children currently in the English program:

Nine parents with children in the English program, who would select the English program for a child in the fall, made additional comments. Several parents stated that though the French immersion program may be good, it is not for everyone nor should it be. They expressed the view that a child's capabilities and ethnic background (which may be 'other than French' especially in Western Canada) should be considered. Also, they added that there is too much emphasis on French in Alberta. Several parents suggested that courses in other languages should be offered. Also a few parents stated that children should be allowed the opportunity to take

immersion (if numbers warrant) but it should not be 'forced' on children who have difficulty in it. Three parents made a comment to the effect that while some parents enrol their children in immersion because they are truly thinking of their children, others do so to enhance their social standing. These parents, one person added, perceive their children as better than those in the English program.

Individual parents commented on the following: being unable to help their child at home if the child was in French immersion; allowing the child choose to learn French later; the anti-English legislation in Quebec and the expectation that English-speaking Canadians become bilingual; the emphasis on the French immersion program at Mountain View such that English students are not given the same treatment; the continuation of French immersion in a separate building because of the conflict it causes between students, parents, and teachers in a dual-track school. This parent added:

> I think it's time for parents and teachers in Hinton to go back to putting emphasis on the quality of what our kids are being taught and to stop arguing about what language it's being taught in...

Three parents, with children in the English program who were undecided with respect to placement in the fall, made comments. One person asked why French immersion was so 'over-rated', when in their opinion, there were many other languages that could be learned. Another parent wished to see the languages more integrated and indicated that because of a recent move to town, they did not have the opportunity to select immersion for their

child. The third parent commented that the school favors 'French students' and discriminates against English students. As an example, this parent cited a trip to Quebec for French students. Also, this parent felt that some items in the questionnaire should have had fewer forced choice responses.

The parent with a child in the English program who would choose French immersion in the fall, indicated that her son had previously been in immersion but hated it and by his choice is now in the English program. Although saddened by the decision because she and her husband are bilingual, she stated:

> What I feel is important for him, is to get the best education possible, English or French! - and he has to like school.

B. Parents with children currently in the French immersion program:

There were comments from 37 parents with children in French immersion who would choose French immersion for a child entering Kindergarten in the fall. Many parents indicated that they were either satisfied or extremely pleased with the progress of their child(ren) in immersion. As a reason for enrolling children in immersion some parents cited extra challenge to ward off boredom and stimulate interest. A few added that in immersion children are in a warm, positive, caring environment, teachers and students seem close, and care is taken to explain and to help children understand one another. Still others wanted their children to benefit from opportunities they never had and see the school as the best and only place their children can learn French. Some parents

cited the advantages of speaking two languages. A few of these parents have selected French immersion because it is the only immersion program offered and they would like to see other language options. Two parents described the official language policy of Canada as good for Canadians, and shared the opinion that people who oppose French do so for political reasons or because they are prejudiced and have confused language and culture.

Two parents indicated that if their child had difficulty, they would transfer the child to the English program because resources in English are more easily available and they could more easily assist with remediation. Other parents 'don't care' for some French immersion teachers though they admit that this is not unique to the French immersion program. Also, although they realize that there is little choice available, they would like to see more experienced teachers in the classrooms. Concerns focused on keeping good teachers and continued quality instruction.

Individual concerns included: a higher quality program at the high school level, a stronger sense of community in the school, and more opportunities to experience French culture. One parent sees a move toward interactive, intrinsic learning, multi-age groupings and continuous progress as a way of making 'that which is good' even better! Another stated:

> Research shows that children learn best in programs that are new and being supported by the educational establishment. Immersion is a trendy and 'yuppie' program. I want the best that the very limited traditional public education system can provide - immersion is one such bonus. I'd put my children in Chinese immersion if I believed the youngest

and the most dynamic teachers were in that program.

Individual parents made comments regarding various topics such as: a possible need for more discipline in classrooms; immersion as an opportunity for children with average academic skills to increase their average thus gaining entrance to university; a possible lower pupil/teacher ratio; a recommendation for a full-time teacher-aide in Grade 1 classrooms with 20-25 students; the possible advantage of immersion centre; the disorganization of Mountain View School; the lack of availability of transportation for French immersion that results in loss of numbers to program; frustration at being unable to help with reading and spelling; difficulty communicating with teachers; an observation that children in immersion are the same ones at piano, dancing, and swimming. Also, there were individual comments regarding some of the items on the questionnaire as being: too political, too leading, too heavily loaded regarding immersion, unclear and too complex for a simple yes/no response.

Ten parents, with children in immersion who are undecided with respect to a kindergarten placement in September, provided additional comments. Three parents suggested that because each child is different, a program may or may not be suitable for their next child. Two parents expressed concern that they could not help their child adequately with homework and one indicated that he/she could not ask questions or quiz their child on school work.

Other individuals commented concerning the following topics:

strained teacher-student relationships possibly due to teachers' lack of English skills, uncertainty regarding the potential outcomes of the program with respect to the full development of a child's learning potential, perceived lowered achievement regarding English writing skills, relocation difficulty, teachers' lack of enthusiasm in certain subject areas, more work involved in immersion, would like immersion offered in a community school or more than one school, core French for K-12 as adequate, lack of socialization opportunities for children in immersion, and delight with the French fluency of a child currently in the French immersion program.

Three parents with children currently in French immersion who would select an English program for a child entering kindergarten in the fall provided comments. One parent whose daughter has reading difficulties was concerned that transferring out of the French immersion program was 'easier said than done'. This parent believed that while her child would experience similar problems in the English program, she would at least be in a position where she could help with remediation. In spite of this knowledge, the decision to transfer is difficult and this parent is worried that her child will have partial knowledge of two languages and know neither well.' The second parent expressed concerns that the English program is suffering, the school has lost good English teachers and the staff and students seem segregated. The third parent commented that several drop-outs from the French immersion program were due to dissatisfaction with instruction and the cliquy

and arrogant attitude of children in the program.

C. Parents with children currently in both programs:

Of the four parents who have children enrolled in both programs, three chose to comment. The parent who would select English for a child in Kindergarten this fall, stated:

> I think some teachers and parents make it an issue when the French and English are put together. If these issues are not to become a problem between students, I think parents and teachers should keep their feelings to themselves.

One of two parents who selected immersion stated that the questionnaire focussed too much on French immersion; yet, this parent wanted more questions on problems encountered in immersion and the decision to transfer. The other parent mentioned that French immersion students lack a foundation in English skills (no phonics) which, because of a lack of time and training they are not prepared to teach. Also, they did not wish to pressure their child after a long day and/or week to hours of tutoring. This parent believed that the English skills of immersion students were 'horrendous' in high school, but for social reasons they did not wish to uproot their child. They also did not agree with what they perceived to be non-disciplinary methods and the general 'fighting' atmosphere within the school. Despite these concerns they would select French immersion for a child in kindergarten next fall.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION OF PARENTAL VIEWS REGARDING CHOICE OF PROGRAM

Questions concerning parental beliefs, attitudes and values were answered in this comparative study. The responses to these questions suggest that parental views on many factors distinguish parents with children in French immersion from parents with children in the English program. Following is a brief discussion concerning the results with respect to each of these factors.

Difficulty of choice

Question 1.0 Do parents consider the decision regarding the choice between the regular English program and the french immersion program for their child a difficult one?

Where French immersion programs are available in elementary schools, parents are faced with making a decision regarding the placement of their child. While Bienvenue's (1983) results show that 72% of parents of children in the regular English program and 100% of parents with children in the French immersion program deliberate on issues related to the choice of program for their child, it appears from these results that almost one-third (32.5%) of parents surveyed found that decision difficult. With respect to this issue there does not appear to be a statistically significant difference between parents with children in the regular English program and parents with children in French immersion.

Socio-economic factors

Question 2.0 Is the French immersion program serving children from upper socio-economic backgrounds as indicated by the educational level and the type of occupation of their parents?

Findings from this study reveal a statistically significant difference between parents with respect to educational background. Parents of children in French immersion tend to be more highly educated than are parents of children in the regular English program. For example, while 32.7% of parents with children in immersion have attended university, completed university or gone to professional or post-graduate school, only 10.8% of their counterparts have acquired a similar level of education. These figures are similar to those of Bienvenue (1983), who found that besides significant differences existing in fathers' education, 28% of mothers of the immersion population had university degrees compared to 12% of mothers of the regular English population. These results also agree with the findings of other researchers such as Lapkin (1984), Lapkin and Swain (1985), Bienvenue (1983), Olson and Burns (1983), and Trites and Price (1986).

In addition, the results suggest a statistically significant difference between parents with respect to occupational status (see Table 5). Although parents of the immersion population are represented in all occupational classes, they are more likely to be engaged in professional occupations than are their counterparts. On the other hand, parents with students in the English program are more heavily represented in the trade occupations (37.8%). This evidence is consistent with Burns'(1982) conclusion, that persons

in professional occupations are greatly over-represented in immersion programs. Though not conclusive, the data suggests that social structure affects program selection.

Personal and social/community factors affecting parental choice

Question 3.0 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the belief that parents have the right to choose a French immersion program?

While 95.6% of parents believe they should have the right to select a French immersion program for their child, there is a significant difference between parent groups with respect to the percentage who agree (French immersion 97.5%; English 90.2%). Comments suggesting that the program should be offered 'only where numbers warrant' from several parents with children in the English program support this finding. The issue of cost and the effect of immersion on the regular program are factors that appear to influence the beliefs of parents with students in the English program regarding parental rights to choose a French immersion program for their children. On the other hand, parents with children in immersion are so committed to the program that extra costs, if any, are seen as worthwhile.

Question 3.1 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the perception of pressure from the community to select either the English or the French immersion program?

Results show no difference between parent groups with respect to this question. In fact, 91.4% of parents did not feel pressure from members of the community with respect to the selection of

programs for their child. Thus, even though a few parents (according to their comments) feel the school is 'pushing' the French immersion program, most parents do not feel pressured to put their children in one program or the other.

Question 3.2 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to outside influences on program selection?

While parents generally do not feel pressure from members of the community with respect to program selection, parents of students in the English program consider the presence of friends and the rating of the program by other parents and school personnel to be more important than do their counterparts (see Table 7). This finding is surprising if one accepts the hypothesis that many parents of French immersion students select immersion because it is "stylish, trendy, prestigious, elitist..., and these parents wish to keep up with the Joneses" (Lemire, 1989). It appears that Immersion parents at least do not perceive themselves as easily influenced by other parents, friends or school personnel. Instead, the data suggest that parents who select the English program tend to be more easily influenced by others.

Question 3.3 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to satisfaction with their placement decision and with the quality of instruction their children are receiving?

According to the data, there are no significant differences between the two groups of parents with respect to satisfaction with their placement decision and the quality of instruction their children are receiving. Since the items on the questionnaire

focused on general instruction rather than specific instruction in French, it is not possible to compare these results directly with those of Environics (1990) and Bienvenue (1983). Where the results of these studies revealed that parents with children in the English program had a negative attitude toward instruction in French, this study shows a high level of satisfaction on the part of both parent groups with respect to their choice of program and the quality of instruction.

As expected, there is a statistically significant difference between parent groups with respect to their choice of program for a child entering kindergarten in the fall. What is interesting and noteworthy however, is that 84.6% of immersion parents selected the same program compared to only 69.8% of parents with children in the English program (the same percentage that indicated they were very satisified with the English program). A greater percentage of this population is undecided (English, 18.6%; French imm. 12.0%) or has selected the immersion program (English 11.6%; French immersion 3.4%) compared with their counterparts. These findings, while not indicative of dissatisfaction with the program, certainly suggest some instability in the regular English program. These results agree with the observations of the investigator particularly over the past four years.

Question 3.4 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to educational aspirations for their children?

No significant difference between parent groups appear to exist with respect to educational aspirations for their children.

Most parents (79%) with children enrolled in Kindergarten to Grade 7 hope their child will attend university. Among the parents themselves, only 27% have some university background. Since the local mines and paper mill form Hinton's economic base, industry employs many parents. Consequently, as the data in Table 4 shows, many parents have technical training. These parents fit into the "middle-class" strata of society; therefore, the aspirations of parents while high do not seem so out of line. In fact, they agree with Olson and Burns' (1983) view that middle-class parents place emphasis on education as necessary for a career that leads to a stable economic future for their children.

Interestingly, 20.2% of parents of the immersion population hope their children reach the post-graduate level compared to 11.9% of parents of the English population. These results are similar to those of Bynner (1972) who reported that aspirations were highest in the professional groups.

Question 3.5 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to confidence in their children's ability to cope with the immersion experience?

Parents clearly differed with respect to confidence in their children's ability to cope with the immersion experience. Over one half (58.5%) of parents with children in the regular English program agree that the immersion experience may be upsetting or confusing for their children compared to less than one fifth (18.8%) of their counterparts. These results are similar to those of Carey (1984). It seems that most parents with children in immersion agree with the findings of Weber and Tardif (1990) that

immmersion is no more stressful for children than the regular English program. Also in keeping with the more positive views of parents with children in immersion with respect to the immersion experience, are studies of older children by such researchers as: Swain and Lapkin (1982); Lambert and Tucker (1972); Genesee (1978), as cited in Genesee, 1983; and Stern, et al (1976).

Parents with children in the English program are also more inclined to be embarrassed by a conversation between their child and a teacher whom they could not understand. Parent groups differed significantly in their responses to this type of situation (English 62.5%; French immersion 8.5%). The results may in part reflect prior positive experiences in such situations for parents with children in immersion or may provide additional support to the view that parents of English students are more easily influenced by the opinions of others. These results also raise the question of parents' confidence or lack of security which may be projected onto their children and thereby influence their decision-making.

Question 3.6 Do parents of students in the English program differ from parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to involvement in school-like learning activities?

Data indicate a real difference between parent groups with respect to volunteering at school and reading to their children at home. The parents with children in immersion are more likely to volunteer regularly and read to their children more frequently. These differences are consistent with reported differences as documented by Lemire (1989), studies by Carey (1984) and Stanutz (1985), and the personal observations of the investigator. In

light of existing knowledge on parental involvement [Ziegler (1987); Lyons, Robbins, Smith (1983); and the benefits of reading to children [Almy (1949); Sutton (1964); Clark (1976); Durkin (1978); Wells (1981); as cited in Romney, Romney and Braun (1989); Cummins (1988)], these data - though not surprising - provide cause for concern and further investigation.

Influence of ethnic background

Question 4.0 Is there a relationship between ethnic background and selection of program?

There is no significant relationship between ethnic background and selection of program. Yet, the findings show that 86% of French Canadians enrol their children in the French immersion program rather than in the English program. Both programs draw from the ethnic diversity of the Hinton population with a slightly lower proportion of 'other' than French or English ethnic groups in the immersion program (French imm. 59.6%; English 69.8%). These results are consistent with those of Bienvenue (1983) in Manitoba. However, since the category 'other' was so loosely defined that it could have included parents who considered themselves Canadian, further investigation of this topic is necessary.

Influence of linguistic background

Question 5.0 Is there a relationship between the number of languages spoken by parents and selection of program?

The findings suggest that the number of languages spoken by a

parent has no bearing on their children's placement. Perhaps parents who speak two languages do not value this skill or it could be that minority groups which are represented almost equally in both programs introduce another factor. That is, parents of children whose mother tongue is not English may be more concerned that their children learn English which is the language of the majority culture. Thus, though the parents speak more than one language, they place their children in the English program to learn English skills.

Views on socio-political issues

Question 6.0 Is there a difference between the views of parents with students in the English program and parents with students in the French immersion program regarding the official languages policy of Canada?

As expected, the findings indicate a significant difference between parent groups on this issue. While 73.9% of parents with students in French immersion agree that the policy of bilingualism is a good idea, only 32.5% of the comparison group share this view. These results agree with the findings of Bienvenue (1983), (French Imm 71%; English 45%).

Also there is a significant difference between parent groups (French Immersion 85.0%, English 37.5%) with respect to the view that Canadian students should make more of an effort to learn both official languages. While these results fall in with those of Bienvenue (1983) in Manitoba (French Immersion 68%, English 39%), considerably more French immersion parents in Hinton agree with this view . A comparison of Bienvenue's population with Hinton's

population with respect to ethnic origin would help in interpreting this difference.

Question 6.1 Is there a difference between the views of parents with students in the English program and parents with students in the French immersion program regarding the necessity for children in Alberta to learn French?

Although most parents view learning French as a necessity for children in Alberta, a difference between parent groups exists with respect to this view. An overwhelming majority of French immersion parents (92.5%) consider this to be the case compared with 68.6% of their counterparts. The response by parents with children in the English program is similar to that reported by Environics (1990), which indicated that 69% of anglophones across the country want Canadian children to learn French and to become bilingual. It is considerably higher than the support recorded by Environics (1990) for second language education in Alberta (reported at 56%) and surprising in light of some comments made by members of both groups of parents who indicated that instruction in a language other than French might be as or more appropriate in Alberta.

Question 6.2 Is there a difference between the views of parents with students in the English program and parents with students in the French immersion program regarding the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada?

There is a significant difference between parent groups with respect to the value of Quebec in Confederation. While 81% of parents with children in immersion do not agree with Quebec separation, only 41.5% of their counterparts share a similar opinion. Again, these results agree with those of Bienvenue (1983)

and appear to confirm the views of Berry and Bourcier (as cited in Fortier, 1990) that attitudes toward bilingualism really provide an opportunity to voice opinions about French Canadians.

Question 6.3 Is there a difference between the views of parents with students in the English program and parents with students in the French immersion program regarding the stability of their opinion with respect to French in school?

Though the opinion of both groups with respect to French in school has remained stable over the past year (90.7%), data show a significant difference between groups of parents with respect to this factor. The findings show that more parents with children in the English program (16.7%) report a change in opinion than parents with children in the French immersion program (6.7%). It is noteworthy that this survey took place just before the Meech Lake impasse. Perhaps these parents, whose opinions according to results reported previously appear to be more easily influenced by others, were influenced by the controversy regarding the 'distinct society' clause in the Constitutional Accord - 1990.

Views on the french immersion program

Question 7.0 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their perception of the fluency of children who study core French?

Although there is a real difference between the parent groups' views concerning the fluency of core French graduates, many parents from both groups indicate a lack of knowledge regarding the outcomes of the program. (French immersion, 40.7%; English 50.0%).

These results are realistic considering that students in the English program do not begin to study core French until grade 4 and 37% of the population surveyed had children in the kindergarten to grade 3 age range. Still, 35.7% of parents with students currently in the English program believe core French will produce functionally bilingual children after grade 12. Conversely, 37.3% of parents with children in immersion do not believe that core French will lead to functional bilingualism after grade 12. These results agree with those of Bienvenue (1983) and add support to the notion that it was the results of the core program that convinced parent groups of a better way to teach a second language - immersion.

Question 7.1 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their perception of the fluency of children in French immersion?

The results show a statistically significant difference between parent groups with respect to the "functional bilingualism" of grade 6 immersion students. Parents with children in French immersion are more positive regarding the outcome of the program at this level than are their counterparts (French immersion 65.3%; English 20.9%). Interestingly, 60.5% of English parents and 25.4% of French immersion parents indicate a lack of knowledge in response to this item.

Question 7.2 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their views of the best way for English-speaking students to become bilingual?

There is a significant difference between the parent groups

with respect to the perception that immersion is the best way for children to become truly bilingual. That 93.1% of parents with children in French immersion agree with this statement is not surprising. These parents agree with the opinion of Gray (1986); Genesee (1983); Barek and Swain (1976); McGillivray (1985); and Gibson (1979). However, they do not agree with Hammerly (1989) who proposes a very different program for persons who wish to become truly bilingual. As we move into the 1990's researchers who favor immersion are focusing more closely on the linguistic competence of immersion students and are striving to find ways to improve their areas of weakness [Swain (1990); Genesee (1983), Genesee et al (1985); Safty (1989); Hammerly (1990)]. Interestingly, though not perfect, 59% of parents with children in the English program recognize immersion as the best way to become bilingual.

Question 7.3 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the French immersion program as too much of an experiment?

The data suggest a statistically significant difference between parent groups with respect to this issue. Results show that 42.9% of parents with children in the regular English program believe that the French immersion program is still too much of an experiment. Only 13.2% of their counterparts share the same belief. Similar results by Bienvenue (1983) led her to conclude that parents of immersion students are best "described as cosmopolitan persons who can accept an innovative and successful educational program" (p.26).

Question 7.4 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the English skills of children in immersion?

Most parents with children in the English program have limited knowledge about the English skills of children in French immersion. However, over two-thirds of parents with children in immersion (67.5%) believe that by the 4th or 5th grade, their children achieve at least as well in English as children in the regular English program. These views regarding achievement with respect to English language skills agree with local results and findings by Genesee (1983); Genesee and Stanley (1976); Shapson and Day (1983) as cited in Sahut (1987); Taschow and Cicansky (1981); Barek and Swain (1976); and the York Region Board (1984).

Question 7.5 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their views on the appropriateness of the program for children who are gifted/talented and children who are speech impaired/delayed, or who have learning or personality problems?

The opinions of the parent groups did not differ regarding the appropriateness of the French immersion program for bright children and children who have special learning or personality problems. Researchers, like parents, overwhelmingly agree that French immersion is not exclusively for bright children [Bruck (1979); Cummins (1983); Lapkin and Swain (1984); Genesee (1983)]. In fact, Sigler and Tourond (1985), Gibson (1985), and Collinson (1989) suggest that special provisions must be made for gifted children in immersion.

Also, like parents, researchers' opinions were divided regarding the appropriateness of French immersion for children who

have special learning or personality problems ([Bruck (1979); Trites and Price (1978-79); Cummins (1983); Wiss (1989)]. The suitability of immersion for developmentally delayed and learning disabled children is definitely in need of further study. Success experiences are critical to the development of a positive self-concept and high self-esteem. In striving to provide their children with the advantages of a second language and a positive self-concept, a parent whose child is experiencing difficulty in immersion faces a dilemma. So that educators can provide parents with sufficient information on which to base a decision regarding transfer or placement, the controversy needs to be resolved.

There is a significant difference between parent groups regarding the belief that children who have speech or language problems before entering school will experience difficulty in French immersion. Parents of children in the English program are more inclined to foresee difficulties than are their counterparts (English 80.5%; French immersion 63.1%). It is likely that some parents, whose children in immersion have had mild speech problems and poor speech habits, have witnessed an improvement such as Wightman (1979) described. This may account for the more positive response by immersion parents to the immersion experience for speech impaired/delayed children. But generally parents agree with researchers such as Swain (as quoted by Bourgeois, 1988), that the immersion experience may result in difficulties for these children.

Question 7.6 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the cost and benefit of the French immersion program in a school?

On all issues concerning the cost and benefit of the French immersion program, the two parent groups differ significantly. Parents with children in the English program are more inclined to believe that: a) the French immersion program costs more, b) the presence of an immersion program in a school does not benefit all students in the school and c) the money spent on French immersion would be better spent on improving core French instruction in all schools. These results are not surprising. In a study in Manitoba, Bienvenue (1983) reported that 66% of parents with children in the English program preferred to see the money spent on immersion, used to improve "the teaching of French throughout the entire school system." (p.16). On March 23, 1990, L'ACFA published an article in defense of spending in the area of bilingualism in 'Le Franco'. Obviously, the costs and benefits to their children of French immersion programs are a concern to parents with children in the English program.

Question 7.7 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the view of immersion as an 'enrichment' program?

Both groups of parents agree that French immersion is an enrichment program (English 82.1%; French immersion 83.9%). If 'enrichment' is interpreted by parents to mean 'something extra', then perhaps parents with children in the English program prefer a basic education with 'no frills'. On the other hand, as Guttman (1983) suggests parents with children in the immersion program may

want something more for their children than they are able to provide.

Question 7.8 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to the continuation of the French immersion program through grade 12?

While the majority of both parent groups concur regarding the continuation of French immersion through to grade 12, there is a significant difference in the groups' responses. As expected, parents with children in the French immersion program are much more likely to agree than are their counterparts (French immersion 81%; English 61%). In their comments parents with children in the English program raise the issue of 'where numbers warrant' with respect to the continuation of the program. This is a sensitive topic that will demand more attention as the immersion program moves into the high school.

Views on the value of learning french

Question 8.0 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their attitudes toward second language acquisition as indicated by their desire to learn a second language?

The results indicate a real difference between the two groups of parents with respect to their desire to learn a second language. While almost all parents with children in French immersion (94.3%) indicate a desire to learn a second language, only 59.5% of their counterparts share the same feeling. It is common for parents to want for their children something they would have liked for

themselves. Consequently, it is not surprising that parents who wish to learn a second language would place their children in a French immersion program. What is interesting is the difference between the two parent groups' desire to learn a second language. Perhaps this aspiration is tied to the rlatively higher level of education of the immersion parents.

Question 8.1 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their perception that immersion creates an elite group?

Parental assessments of the political aspect of the immersion program distinguish the two groups of parents. Those parents who feel that their children are at a disadvantage are being discriminated against cite elitism as a concern; those who do not share their feeling, do not feel elitism is a problem. Parents with children in the English program regard the immersion program as creating differences among children and creating elitism. These findings agree with those of Bienvenue (1983) who commented on the negativity of parents from the English program concerning "their assessments of conflict, the development of a privileged school population and the creation of a 'divided' school system. (p.16). Their view is also supported by Olson and Burns (1983) who suggested that " French immersion children were elite" (p.5) partly due to their family background, an enriched curriculum, and the tendency of professionals to counsel out those children who are less able, have lower socio-economic status and have difficulty. Also, although a diverse range of students enrol in immersion at Mountain View, the results of this study suggest that most children

in immersion are from a higher socio-economic status background than are children in the English program. These realities cannot be denied and lend credibility to the idea of immersion as a program for the elite, which perpetuates elitism.

Question 8.2 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their motivation to learn French?

The results show a significant difference in views between parents with children in the English program and parents with children in immersion concerning all four values commonly associated with being bilingual. As in Bienvenue's study (1983), French immersion parents are significantly more positive than their counterparts on all dimensions (instrumental, interactional, integrative, national/international). However, unlike Bienvenue's study (1983) where the international value distinguished the two sets of parents the most, the results of this study show that the integrative value that most distinguishes the parent groups. While 82.5% of parents with children in immersion regard bilingualism as a means of increasing tolerance toward other cultures, only 43.2% of parents with children in the English program share the same view. It is important to note that in this study parents were not asked to rank the most commonly accepted values of being bilingual. Instead parents agreed or disagreed with statements citing each value. In concert with Environics (1990) results, parents with children in the English program view job opportunities as the main advantage of learning French. Next they view travel in Quebec and abroad as an advantage. Thirdly, they view bilingualism as leading

to an increased understanding of French people and culture and lastly they view bilingualism as leading to increased tolerance of other cultures.

An examination of the reasons given by parents for enrolling their children in a particular program provides similar results. Although more parents who select the French immersion program cite becoming bilingual (48 responses), as their reason for selecting the program, employment opportunities (15 responses), increased understanding and appreciation of cultural differences (14 responses) and preservation of French language and culture (12 responses), are also very important. These results are very similar to those obtained by CPF as reported by Manzer (1990). In accordance with the results of a survey done by the York Region Board of Education (1984); Manzer (1990), Guttman (1983) and Environics (1990), eight parents cite extra stimulation, challenge and personal intellectual growth as reasons why they would select French immersion. Interestingly, even more parents (ten) believe that learning a second language is easier at a young age and cite this as a reason for enrolling their child in French immersion. Several parents also point to immersion as an opportunity they did not have, and regard it as a positive learning environment for their child(ren). They see bilingualism as useful in further education and immersion as an opportunity to build self-esteem, to develop personally and to become more open-minded. Finally, many parents report that the French immersion program appeals to their child(ren).

Views on the location and effects of specialist programs within a school

Question 9.0 Is there a difference between parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their beliefs regarding the amount of emphasis on French immersion at school?

Results show a significant difference between the views of two groups of parents with respect to the amount of emphasis on French immersion at Mountain View. As one might expect, most parents (87.7%) with children in immersion believe there is not too much emphasis on immersion while a significant percentage (72.2%) of parents with children in the regular English program believe the opposite. Comments from parents with children in the English program also indicate that they believe there is too much emphasis on French in Alberta, that the French immersion program is 'pushed' at school, that the children in the English program are suffering, and that French immersion divides the school. Unfortunately, these views are common in dual-track schools as reported by researchers such as: Lemire (1989), Cotterill (1983), and Lapkin and Swain (1984).

The dissatisfaction that results from a belief that the school over-emphasizes one program has had a negative impact on the school in general. The numbers in the English population have declined with many parents citing their reason for transferring their children as 'too much French'. This decline is symptomatic of other dual-track schools in Canada (Canadian Education Association, 1983).

Question 9.1 Is there a difference between the attitudes of parents of students in the English program and parents of students in the French immersion program with respect to their beliefs regarding dual-track and neighbourhood schools?

The results suggest that the attitudes of the parent groups do not differ with respect to the importance of neighbourhood schools as contributing to the development of a sense of community. However, the parents of children in immersion are more nearly divided on this issue than are parents of students in the regular stream (French immersion 55.2%; English 68.3%).

Bienvenue's (1983) results showed a greater difference between the two sets of parents on this topic. While the responses of the parents with children in French immersion differ by only 8% (Bienvenue 47%, current study 55.2%), the results show a larger difference with respect to parents with children in the English program (Bienvenue 86%, current 68.3%). In Hinton, the two schools that serve the student population on the hill are within walking distance of each other. Thus distance is not a big factor in determining school attendance areas and either school could be regarded by many parents of each school as their neighbourhood school. Also, Hinton schools are not generally viewed as community centres. The town organizes and operates extra-curricular activities which are held either at the Hinton Recreation Centre or at a school with the necessary facilities. For these reasons, parents who received the questionnaire may not view the 'neighbourhood school' concept the same way as parents from a metropolitan area or parents who live in the 'valley' section of Hinton. Transportation is an issue but not one that the

investigator could examine thoroughly because of the limitations of this study.

Responses with respect to the offering of an English program and a French immersion program within one school, suggest a significant difference between the parent groups. Though most parents from both groups favor dual-track schools, (English 71.8%; French immersion 86.2%), parents of children in immersion are more positive than are their counterparts.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary

The personal and social/community factors that influence the differential placement of children in either the elementary French immersion program or the English program were the focus of this study. It was designed to compare the attitudes and the beliefs of parents who have selected the regular English program with those of parents who have selected the French immersion program. The investigator developed and administered a sixty-five item questionnaire that contained a section for comments. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. The statistical analysis involved an examination of each bivariate relationship and T-tests.

All parents whose children attend Mountain View have a choice with respect to program for their child. The data from this study suggest that almost one-third of parents find the decision regarding the placement of their child difficult. The factors that influence parents' decision-making are critical to an understanding of their views and developing a positive working relationship with them.

The two parent groups differed significantly with respect to several factors. First, while the French immersion program draws

children from all socio-economic strata, it is evident that children whose parents have a university education and professional occupations, are more heavily represented in the immersion program than in the regular English program. While there are no differences regarding educational aspirations for their children, there are differences with respect to the confidence parents have in their children's ability to cope with the immersion experience and their involvement in school-like learning activities. Parents with children in the immersion program are more confident in their children's ability to cope, volunteer more often at school, and read more frequently to their children at home.

The data suggest there are also differences between parents' attitudes regarding several socio-political issues such as official bilingualism, the necessity for children in Alberta to learn French and the separation of Quebec. Parents with children in immersion are more supportive of bilingualism and do not believe that Quebec should separate. Interestingly, a significantly higher percentage of parents with children in the English program report that their opinions have changed concerning bilingualism over this past year. Data also show that their decisions tend to be more easily influenced by others.

Many beliefs with respect to the core French and the French immersion program were also examined. While there are no differences regarding the appropriateness of the immersion program for the gifted and the learning-disabled, and the view of immersion as an enrichment program, there are significant differences between

the groups on several other issues. As expected, parents differ with respect to their beliefs regarding the best way to become bilingual, the outcomes of the core French and French immersion program, the English skills of children in French immersion and the view of the French immersion program as too much of an experiment. Parents with children in immersion are generally more positive regarding the outcome of the immersion program and less positive regarding the results of core French. Parents with children in the English program tend to believe that children with speech problems will experience difficulty in immersion more readily than do parents with children in immersion. Also, they are less likely to see the benefits of an immersion program in a school, more likely to regard the immersion program as costly and would prefer to see the money spent on improving instruction in French in all schools.

There are also several significant differences between parents with respect to their attitudes toward second-language acquisition. Parents with children in the immersion program are more likely than their counterparts to want to learn a second language themselves. In addition, the parent groups differ with respect to the value of bilingualism. Especially interesting is the difference between parent groups with respect to the view of bilingualism as a means of increasing tolerance toward other cultures. Parents with children in immersion are far more likely to agree with this view than are parents with children in the English program. On the other hand, the parents of children in the English program are far more likely to see immersion programs as making children in them

different from their friends and creating elitism. As well, they perceive the school as putting too much emphasis on French immersion and are less in favour of dual-track schools than are parents with children in French immersion.

The results of the study indicate that parents with children in French immersion have positive views regarding the quality of instruction and the outcomes of the French immersion program. Generally, they have accepted the evaluative research and many have experienced positive results so far. Most see bilingualism as an asset in the areas of employment, culture, cognitive development and travel. Based on these findings, French immersion parents are likely to continue to want an immersion program for their children in the future.

On the other hand, parents with children in the English program generally have less confidence in the French immersion program. Though the majority (68.6%) believe that students in Alberta should learn French, they prefer it to be taught as a subject in the regular program. Also, many express a desire to have a language other than French taught in school. As a whole, this group of parents is less positive toward bilingualism. While most believe that being bilingual would make it easier to obtain a job and facilitate travel, far fewer perceive bilingualism to be an asset in the area of cultural understanding and tolerance.

A better understanding of the differences between parent groups was the beginning of a plan to promote cooperation among parents and between parents and school officials. The data serve

highlight some important differences between parent groups in a dual-track school - differences in values, attitudes, beliefs, practical concerns and practices regarding their children and elementary education.

Implications for the Yellowhead School Division

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications for the school division may be stated:

A) School Level

1. Recognizing a) the value of parent involvement with respect to children's learning and b) the key to involvement being communication, it is imperative that the school find meaningful ways to sensitize parents, especially parents with children in the English program, to the role they play in promoting in their children attitudes conducive to learning.

2. This study identified that parents lack information regarding many topics in both core French and French immersion. It is very important that school authorities provide parents with information relating to these topics. Parent information evenings could be organized to inform parents regarding the goals and objectives of each program.

3. Recognizing the disparate demographic characteristics between

students in the English and French immersion populations which affect school achievement, the school administration must ensure that school policies and procedures meet the needs of all students.

4. School staff and administration must work with Canadian Parents for French to welcome and support French immersion teachers who are new to Hinton. An attempt must be made to ensure that this support continues throughout the year.

5. School administration must continue to maintain an open-door policy where parents feel free to discuss concerns and make recommendations.

B) Senior Administration (Superintendency Staff)

1. There is a need to create a long-term plan with respect to the implementation and the expansion of the immersion program with organizational direction based on educational objectives instead of political pressure.

2. There is a need to increase the awareness of administrators regarding the problems faced by dual-track administrators whose parents' values, beliefs and practices, are very different. Recognition that the inter-group conflict has its roots in larger socio-linguistic and political tension between

French and English groups in Canada helps place the school 'in context'.

3. With acknowledgment that the politics which surround local school administrators also provide obstacles for central administrators and school board officials, it is recommended that a team with representatives of all stake-holding groups investigate the situation at the school and make recommendations for change.

4. Additional support for administration of schools with immersion programs is necessary. H. Lemire, a senior administrator in Alberta (1989), recommends that school districts "consider amending their administrative allowance structure to allow for differential remuneration for administrators of dual-track schools" (p.114). A different, yet supportive measure would be to increase the time allottment for administrators in dual-track schools.

5. Division officials must continue to be actively involved in teacher recruitment with a concerted effort to attract teachers with prerequisite skills from within the province or Western Canada or who are fluently bilingual. In addition, every effort must be made to keep immersion teachers in the division.

6. Continue to provide financial support and curriculum co-ordination for schools with immersion programs at the district level.

7. All parents with young children must be informed of the goals and the opportunity to participate in a French immersion program. To avoid the view of the school as 'pushing the program', it may be prudent for this to be done at the jurisdictional level.

Recommendations for further research

Further research conducted in the following areas could prove valuable to all concerned with education.

1. A comparison of regular English program classes in dual-track schools and single-track schools would provide information on the effects of immersion in a dual-track setting.

2. An in-depth examination of the beliefs and practices of parents with children in the English program with respect to confidence in their children and involvement in their children's learning could assist in setting up parenting programs.

3. This study was quantitative and resulted in a return of 79% of

questionnaires from parents with children in French immersion and a return of 48% from parents with children in the regular English program. Further relevant data on parents could be obtained using a qualitative phenomenological approach.

4. Ethnographic research involving administrators of French immersion programs in other dual-track and immersion centre schools to document and compare the realities of parent beliefs, expectations, etc. would provide information which could be used in selecting the location of immersion programs.

5. A similar study involving parents who have previously had children in dual-track schools and now have children in either a single-track English school or an immersion centre would provide interesting and useful information.

6. Further research in locations serving larger identifiable minority groups to ascertain enrollment in French immersion and its effects on the linguistic development of children is necessary.

7. A comparative study of student attitudes on socio-political issues would provide information on the effectiveness of the immersion program in promoting tolerance and understanding of others.

8. A longitudinal study of parental aspirations for children would be interesting.

9. Qualitative action-based research in classrooms to investigate the relationship between methodology and achievement in French immersion is necessary.

10. Action-based research designed to examine the effects of curricula modified to improve the linguistic skills of students in French immersion in comparable classes is required.

11. Investigate further why most children in immersion reside on the hill area of Hinton, with particular attention to the issue of transportation and the community school concept.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire Part A.

For each question or statement please circle the number of the response that indicates your answer.

1. Do you live in the Mountain View School attendance area?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

2. How many children do you have?

	[1]
	[2]
	[3]
	[4]
	[5]
	[more than 6]

3. How many of your children attend Mountain View School?

	[1]
	[2]
	[3]
	[4]

4. At Mountain View my child is (children are) enrolled in

the English Program	[1]
the French Immersion program	[2]
both programs	[3]

5. Was the decision to place your child in either the English or the French Immersion program a difficult one?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

6. Did you feel pressure from members of the community to place your child in the program you chose?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

(If you are a single parent omit question 7 and proceed to question 8.)

7. Do both you and your (wife/husband/partner) agree on your child's placement?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

8. In general, how satisfied are you with the choice you have made?

Very satisfied	[1]
Somewhat satisfied	[2]
Not very satisfied at all	[3]

9. In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of instruction your child (or children) is (are) receiving?

Very satisfied	[1]
Somewhat satisfied	[2]
Not satisfied at all	[3]

10. How often, in the past year, have you volunteered for a school activity?

Not at all	[1]
Occasionally	[2]
On a regular basis	[3]

11. I hope that my child (children) reaches (reach) the following level of education:

Some high school	[1]
Complete high school	[2]
Community college/vocational trade school/commercial	[3]
Some university	[4]
Complete university	[5]
Post grad. university (Master/ Doctorate)	[6]

Please rate your responses to the following statements on a scale of 1 to 3.

12. "I feel I have a positive self concept."

Very much so	[1]
Somewhat	[2]
Not at all	[3]

13. "My own schooling was a positive experience."

Very much so	[1]
Somewhat	[2]
Not at all	[3]

How important would you estimate that each of the following was in your decision to enroll your child in the program you chose?

14. My child's (children's) friends were in the program.

Important consideration	[1]
Minor consideration	[2]
No influence	[3]

15. I know people who had enrolled their child (children) in the program and had given positive feedback.

Important consideration	[1]
Minor consideration	[2]
No influence	[3]

16. A teacher, school administrator, trustee, or consultant convinced us of the program's merit.

Important consideration	[1]
Minor consideration	[2]
No influence	[3]

Questionnaire Part B.

Please respond to the following statements:

1. Reading to children is important to their academic achievement.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

2. About how often is your child read to at home?

Occasionally	[1]
Several times a week	[2]
Almost every night	[3]

3. About how many books (hard or soft cover) do you have in your home?

0 - 50	[1]
50 - 300	[2]
300 or more	[3]

4. About how many of these are 'children's books'?

None	[1]
Some	[2]
Most	[3]

5. I would find it embarrassing if I could not understand a conversation between my son (daughter) and his/her teacher.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

6. I want to be able to help my child do homework in English rather than provide guidance with homework in French.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

7. The French Immersion program might be an upsetting or confusing experience for my child (children).

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

8. Children who have speech or language problems before entering school could find it difficult to cope with `Immersion'.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

9. `Immersion' is only for bright or advanced children.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

10. Children who have special learning or personality problems would find it difficult in French Immersion.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

11. Children in `Immersion', by the end of the fourth or fifth grade, achieve at least as well in English as children in the English program.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]
Don't know	[3]

12. Being bilingual is valuable in Canada.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

13. In the future, jobs will be easier to get if you are bilingual.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

14. Children studying `Core French' will be functionally bilingual by the end of Grade 12.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]
Don't know	[3]

15. Children in 'Immersion' will be functionally bilingual at the end of Grade 6.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]
Don't know	[3]

16. French Immersion is the best way for English-Speaking children to become truly bilingual.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

17. French Immersion is an enrichment program available to students.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

18. Should children in this province learn French?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

19. Knowledge of the French language will help my child (children) to better understand French-speaking people and their culture.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

20. Knowledge of the French language will help my child (children) to be more tolerant of other cultures.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

21. Being fluent in French is important because it makes travelling and visiting in Quebec and abroad easier.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

22. French Immersion programs are not a good idea because they make children in them different from their friends.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

23. French Immersion programs create an elite group.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

24. French Immersion costs more.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]
Don't know	[3]

25. Because grants are available from the Federal Government for schools who have French Immersion programs having a French Immersion program in a school may benefit all students in the school.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

26. The money spent on French Immersion would be better spent on improving instruction in French available to students in all English schools.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

27. Having two official languages in Canada is a good idea.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

28. Quebec should separate from the rest of Canada.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]
Undecided	[3]

29. French Immersion should be continued through to grade 12.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

30. The French Immersion program is too much of an experiment at this time.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

31. There is too much emphasis on French Immersion in Mountain View.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

32. The French Immersion program should be discontinued.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

33. French Immersion and English programs should be offered in the same school.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

34. Has your opinion regarding "children learning French in school so that they could become bilingual" changed over the past year?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

35. Should parents have the right to choose a French Immersion program for their child (children)?

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

36. Canadians should make more of an effort to learn both French and English.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

37. It is important that children go to neighborhood schools in order to develop a sense of community.

Yes	[1]
No	[2]

38. If you had a child beginning kindergarten in September 1990, in which program would you enroll him/her?

English	[1]
French Immersion	[2]
Undecided	[3]

What are your reasons for enrolling your child in this program?

39. Any other comments:

Questionnaire Part C

The following questions will help us group your answers with others which we will receive in this survey. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

A. Which of following best describes your present employment status?

If you are a student check [5] and go to question C.

Working full-time.....[1]
Working part-time.....[2]
Unemployed or looking for a job.....[3]
Stay at home full-time.....[4]
Student.....[5]
Retired.....[6]

If "Working full-time", "Working part-time", or "Unemployed":

B. As a rule, what is your principal occupation? (If unemployed, what was your last job?)

Professional.....[1]
Administrator or owner of big business.....[2]
Technician, semi-professional.....[3]
Administrator or owner of small business.....[4]
Office worker (white collar), service, sales [5]
Tradesman, skilled, semi-skilled worker (blue collar).....[6]
Unskilled worker.....[7]
Other: (SPECIFY) _____ [8]

C. What is the highest level of education that you have reached?

Some elementary.....[1]
Complete elementary.....[2]
Some high school.....[3]
Completed high school.....[4]
Community college/vocational/trade school/ commercial.....[5]
Some university.....[6]
Completed university.....[7]
Post-graduate university/professional school.[8]

D. What is your ethnic background?

British [1]
French [2]
German [3]
Ukrainian [4]
Other [5]

The next few questions refer to your spouse. If you are not married or living as a couple, go to Question I.

E. Which of the following best describes the present employment status of your spouse?

If you are a student check question [5] and go to question I.

Working full-time.....[1]
Working part-time.....[2]
Unemployed or looking for a job.....[3]
Stay at home full-time.....[4]
Student.....[5]
Retired.....[6]

F. If "Working full-time", "Working part-time", or "Unemployed":

As a rule, what is your spouse's principal occupation? (If unemployed, what was your spouse's last job?)

Professional.....[1]
Administrator or owner of big business.....[2]
Technician, semi-professional.....[3]
Administrator or owner of small business.....[4]
Office worker (white collar), service, sales [5]
Tradesman, skilled, semi-skilled worker (blue collar).....[6]
Unskilled worker.....[7]
Other: (SPECIFY)_____[8]

G. What is the highest level of education that your spouse has reached?

Some elementary.....[1]
Complete elementary.....[2]
Some high school.....[3]
Completed high school.....[4]
Community college/vocational/trade school/ commercial.....[5]
Some university.....[6]
Completed university.....[7]
Post-graduate university/professional school.[8]

H. What is the ethnic background of your spouse?

British [1]
French [2]
German [3]
Ukrainian [4]
Other [5]

I. How many languages can you (or your spouse) speak?

[1]
[2]
[3 or more]

J. Would you like to speak a second language?

Yes.....[1]
No.....[2]

K. French is (or was at one time) spoken by relatives or persons who are (or were) close to me.

Yes.....[1]
No.....[2]